Annual meeting will span nuclear threats, Poor People’s Campaign

Lay claim to your share of last year’s Nobel Peace Prize. That’s right: When the prize went to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), we won, too!

How’s that? Well, PeaceWorks-KC belongs to the national group Peace Action, an affiliate of ICAN. And when ICAN won, its executive director, Beatrice Fihn, said all the groups within ICAN held the prize. So come to the PeaceWorks Annual Meeting and take a bow!

**Date/time:** Sunday, March 11, 2-4 pm  
**Place:** Simpson House, 4509 Walnut, KC, MO

You probably, on Jan. 25, saw that the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists set its Doomsday Clock at two minutes before midnight.

**Possible silver lining on looming mushroom cloud?**

*By Jim Hannah*

The recent verbal bombs lobbed by the leaders of the US and North Korea have been, to say the least, alarming. Blustering with nuclear weapons is not just inane, it’s insane.

Even doomsday prophets couldn’t make this stuff up. Is this the way the world will end? With schoolboy taunts about the relative size of nuclear buttons?

It’s hard to take in. Could it really be that the fate of civilization, the lives of billions, and the life-sustaining beauty of Earth itself hang on the actions of just two persons? That may seem in-credible, but it is, in fact, the irrational state of our nuclear-armed world.

Remember that Robert Frost poem, “Fire and Ice”?

*Some say the world will end in fire,*  
*Some say in ice.*  
*From what I’ve tasted of desire*  
*I hold with those who favor fire.*  
*But if it had to perish twice,*  
*I think I know enough of hate*  
*To say that for destruction ice*  
*Is also great*  
*And would suffice.*

The grim paradox of nuclear weapons is that they can bring both fire and ice—fireballs of heat greater than the sun, instantaneously annihilating tens of thousands, followed by nuclear winter, killing off the rest of humanity in a prolonged agony of starvation, anarchy, and disease. Some scientists say it might take only a hundred of the world’s nuclear weapons (a miniscule percentage of the total payload) to wreak this havoc. For real? Quite possibly.

So where’s the silver lining in the looming mushroom cloud? Sometimes it’s helpful to take a backward glance when trying to see the way forward. Remember the 1980s? As the sheer MADness of nuclear Mutually Assured Destruction became increasingly evident, millions of people...
Annual meeting — continued from p. 1

(before devastation from nukes). Two minutes is the closest to doom that the scientists have moved the clock since 1953, during the Cold War. Our annual meeting will pay heed to the clock.

Also, recognizing the ongoing war on the poor and minorities, PeaceWorks is joining with local groups to revive Martin Luther King Jr.’s Poor People’s Campaign. (See story, p. 4.) A PeaceWorks leader will expose the increasing militarism in our government and our culture, and will explore ways we can take action. Also, Michael Enriquez, executive director of Stand Up KC, and a low-wage worker will share their stories and say why that group (for $15 an hour wage and strong unions) is part of the Poor People’s Campaign.

We’ll kick off the meeting by visiting over finger-food (bring munchies). Then comes our program, with a triple focus on the Nobel Prize, the Doomsday Clock, and the Poor People’s Campaign. We’ll also review our achievements, ponder the treasurer’s report, and discuss coming events. We’ll acclaim the winners of two PeaceWorks awards: the Charles E. Bebb Peace Merit Award (for an individual) and the Kris and Lynn Cheatum Community Peace Award (for a group). And we’ll elect our leaders.

PeaceWorks Board Candidate Slate

Officers (one-year term): chairperson, Henry Stoever; vice chair, Mary Hladky; treasurer, Dave Pack; and secretary, Sunny Hamrick.

Board candidates (two-year term): Lu Mountenay, Jenny Semet, Mark Semet.

Note: Board members who have served only the first year of their two-year term (and don’t need to be voted on) are Bennette Dibben, Ron Faust, Spencer Graves, Lauren Hall, Jim Hannah, Ann Suel lentrop, Leigh Woody, and Joseph Wun.

Love notes: Bring a friend. And a plus: No photo ID needed to vote!

Silver lining on the mushroom cloud — continued from p. 1

filled the streets of New York, London, Berlin, and other capitals, demanding an end to the Cold War. These demonstrations of public opinion helped diminish the number of nuclear warheads from 70,000 to the 12,000 yet extant. But this is still an insane number. And the outcry of civil society is still the best hope for humanity.

PeaceWorks-KC is part of that outcry. Each August we renew the “Never again!” pledge of Hiroshima and Nagasaki survivors of the first atomic bomb. And each Memorial Day, we have a public witness at the old and new nuclear weapons parts plants (at Bannister Federal Complex and the new National Security Campus). We remind the public of the clear and present danger posed by nukes, as well as their past contamination of people and the environment.

And we’re in good company. There are growing signs of public re-awakening to the nuclear threat. Last year’s Nobel Peace Prize went to ICAN (see icanw.org) for its successful International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. Nearly 500 NGOs, representing millions from more than 100 nations, have partnered with ICAN, including Peace Action, our affiliate organization. Their work resulted in an accord reached by two-thirds of the United Nations’ membership to make nuclear weapons illegal, once 50 member nations have signed and ratified the treaty.

Nuclear disarmament may seem like a lost cause. But so were earlier campaigns that have delegitimized chemical and biological weapons, landmines, and cluster munitions—declaring each one illegal in the name of our common humanity.

Those who want a nuclear weapons-free world are a world majority, not the minority that powerful forces would have us believe. Nuclear weapons have had their day. It’s time for civil society to have its way. And it’s time for you to have your say.

—Jim Hannah, an evangelist and former minister in the Community of Christ, is a PeaceWorks-KC Board member.
By Marika Svolos

“Before I was on death row, I actually believed in the death penalty,” shared Joe Amrine. He was wrongfully convicted of a crime he did not commit and spent 17 years on death row. This changed his perception of the death penalty.

On Jan. 13, Joe and his friend Reggie Griffin, who was also exonerated, spoke at Visitation Church in KC, MO, sponsored by Missourians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty. Joe’s and Reggie’s stories reveal the brokenness of our criminal justice system.

Joe saw 64 people get executed on death row. He himself was convicted of murdering a fellow prison inmate, although he was not even in the room when the killing occurred. Prison guards were set on blaming Joe for this crime. They interviewed another inmate 135 times before he finally said Joe committed the murder. All three witnesses who testified against Joe later admitted to lying. One wrote letters to government officials every year, asking for Joe’s release.

In a lengthy court process, the Missouri Supreme Court overturned his conviction. In Joe’s and Reggie’s stories, prison guards and prosecutors went to great lengths to secure convictions. It was possible to frame prisoners because the criminal justice system is biased toward the wealthy and powerful. It would have cost perhaps $100,000 for Reggie’s family to hire lawyers skilled in fighting capital charges. A civil lawyer who had no experience with cases similar to his offered to represent him for $10,000, and Reggie was found guilty after the jury deliberated only 45 minutes. Others in the system benefited from securing a wrongful conviction. The prosecutor in Reggie’s case became a judge. The judge became a senior judge. “Everyone advanced off my case,” Reggie said, “except for me.”

Black Americans are more likely to be wrongfully convicted than whites. The day before Reggie was supposed to be released, the prosecutor refiled charges. In the trial, the judge asked the prosecutor, “Are you seeking the truth in this matter?” The prosecutor responded, “No, I’m seeking a conviction.”

In a punitive system that looks for someone to blame and punish, a prison inmate who is seen as disposable can easily be sentenced to death.

—Marika Svolos is a member of Jerusalem Farm, a Catholic intentional community building relationships in northeast KC, MO.

Contact elected officials

Mayor Sly James: 816-513-3500
City Council: 816-513-1368
President Donald Trump
202-456-1111 comments
202-456-1414 switchboard
Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.): 202-224-6154
Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.): 202-224-5721
Rep. Emanuel Cleaver (D-5th dist., Mo.): 202-225-4535
Rep. Sam Graves (R-6th district, Mo.): 202-225-7041
Rep. Vicky Hartzler (R-4th district, Mo.): 202-225-2876
Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.): 202-224-4774
Sen. Jerry Moran (R-Kan.): 202-224-6521
Rep. Kevin Yoder (R-3rd district, Kan.): 202-225-2865
Dr. King’s Poor People’s Campaign, renewed for today

By Jim Hannah


Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. saw this triad of intertwined forces as the greatest obstacle to his vision of the Beloved Community, where the dream of justice and peace for all might be realized.

Fifty years ago, King launched the Poor People’s Campaign as the second phase of the civil rights movement, saying, “We believe the highest patriotism demands the ending of the [Vietnam] war and the opening of a bloodless war to final victory over racism and poverty.”

King was assassinated before he could fully implement his campaign, but the seeds he sowed in 1968 are beginning to stir from dormancy. A national Martin Luther King Jr. Poor People’s Campaign has been birthed, joined by the Greater Kansas City Justice Coalition with forums sponsored on Jan. 16 and 20.

Sub-titled “Building Unity and Demanding Justice Using Creative Nonviolence,” the forum at KCMO Health Department Jan. 16 featured speakers including PeaceWorks-KC Board member Mary Hladky. She explored “the war economy” and its impact on racism, poverty, and environment. See her full text at peaceworkskc.org. Some excerpts:

The war economy & poverty. Military spending is a choice. ... So when you are told there is no money to take care of basic needs here at home, don’t believe it. A choice has been made by our elected representatives, ignoring the needs of Americans, to do the bidding of the military-industrial complex. We need to confront the war industry and the politicians who serve it. ... Americans deserve a budget that meets our country’s real needs to strengthen the economy, create jobs, and provide opportunity through education. Real national security isn’t measured by the size of our military, it’s measured by the welfare of our people.

War & racism. There is a war on people of color. For example, Blacks make up only 13 percent of the population, but about 40 percent of those incarcerated are black. Mass incarceration disposes of, and makes invisible, a growing under-class. ... Racism goes together with the war against immigrants and refugees. The Trump administration is trying to institute policies to prevent immigration from many Muslim countries and implementing cruel deportations of Dreamers, Salvadorans, Haitians, and Nicaraguans. Who will be next?

War & the environment. The US military is the largest single user of oil and one of the world’s worst contributors to global warming. Our government is also responsible for exposing our military men and women, and civilians, to large amounts of depleted uranium from its weaponry used in Iraq and Afghanistan, with devastating health effects. Nearly 900 of the approximately 1,300 US superfund sites, which are the most toxic sites, are military related. Add to that the dangers of nuclear war, or nuclear accident, which threaten life on earth as we know it.

Hladky concluded her remarks with an invitation to join the Poor People’s Campaign: “Now is the time to come together in massive numbers (because that’s what it’s going to take) to demand justice through direct nonviolent actions at the local, state, and national level—and at the voting booth. Now is the time to bring to fruition Dr. King’s vision for a ‘revolution of values’ and an America that cares for all of its people.”

Mary Hladky and granddaughter Eliza
"King’s Revolutionary Vision and His Final Speeches" were revived Jan. 20 in five speeches delivered by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the final weeks of his life. Several hundred persons gathered at St. James Church in KC, MO, to hear the dramatic readings, sponsored by Stand Up KC and by United We Stand: Poor People’s Campaign. —Photos by Jim Hannah

Pastor Darryl Burton, United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, reads from “Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution”: “No individual can live alone, no nation can live alone, and anyone who feels that he can live alone is sleeping through a revolution. The world in which we live is geographically one. The challenge that we face today is to make it one in terms of brotherhood.”

Eric Dixon, union representative, reads from Southern Christian Leadership Conference’s press release for the 1968 Poor People’s Campaign: “Our experience is that the Federal Government … never moves meaningfully against social ills until the nation is confronted directly and massively … in aggressive nonviolent demonstrations. The government must be confronted with the urgent need for reforms to fight poverty and racism.”

Erica Downey, of Stand Up KC, reads from “All Work Has Dignity”: “We are saying, ‘Now is the time.’ Get the word across to everybody in power in this time in this town that now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to make an adequate income a reality for all of God’s children. Now is the time for city hall to take a position for that which is just and honest. Now is the time for justice to roll down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream. Now is the time.”

Pastor Donna Simon, of St. Mark’s Hope and Peace Lutheran Church, reads from “Beyond Vietnam”: “We still have a choice today: nonviolent coexistence or violent coannihilation. … We must find new ways to speak for peace in Vietnam and justice throughout the developing world. … If we do not act, we shall surely be dragged down the long, dark, and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight.”

Rev. Rodney Williams, Swope Parkway United Methodist Church, reads from “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop,” MLK’s address April 3, 1968, in Memphis, where the city’s sanitation workers were striking: “We got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn’t matter with me now, because I’ve been to the mountaintop. … I’ve seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land.”
Discriminatory policing and how to respond

By Joseph Wun

On Saturday, Jan. 21, 2017, I was standing near the back of the crowd at the Washington Square Park Women’s Rally in KC, MO. Two uniformed police officers asked if I could speak with them for a moment, and I consented to go with them.

When I asked why, they explained they were responding to a tip, a call, about a “suspicious, Middle-Eastern-looking male reaching into a backpack.” I was wearing a keffiyeh and a backpack.

It was a stop-and-search for fitting a description—for fitting, perhaps, the description for what was justified since there was “the potential to hurt people.” The evidence was a picture, but one I never saw, nor, at the moment, had the presence of mind to demand. I responded in the manner I judged to be right, given my level of practice and my ongoing struggle to be free of the conditioning that guided me in this instance: How do I survive this encounter?

The police asked for my ID; I gave it to them. At once, I knew what they were doing, and hated them for it. I also felt paralyzed. Yet a strange confusion welled, one of sorrow, one that felt sore that they were pressed to perform in this way. That it must hurt them, too. I was acquiescing, hoping, foolishly, that they would also recognize the absurdity of their actions.

After waiting for my ID to run, which required a long-distance search to California, I realized I had not prepared myself for this stop and encounter—I was not expecting to be, potentially, detained.

I forgot. In the moment, I was thinking as I felt, as I have always felt when stopped by the police: that I was being held up—that they were going to take something from me, hurt me, if I did not navigate with razor-sharp precision. My rage settled into a searing, white-hot, quiet response.

They asked for my social security number, which I refused to give. I then, with this feeling of being held-up paramount, offered to open my backpack and disprove their claim. This option, after about 15 minutes of hold-up, came to pass. The officers found my almonds and papers to be “nothing, no weapons that could hurt anybody.” They left.

This remembrance, which I share with you, is a confession: I was in public and caught unpracticed. I feel profoundly embarrassed. I confess my hope that those who bore witness to the encounter now know, now have glimpsed, the everyday indignity that people who express a particular phenotype, or wear a certain dress upon her head, his head, their bodies, endure.

The first question that you should ask, if and when you are in a situation similar:

Am I under arrest?

If the answer is no, then you are free to go.

If yes, then remain silent.

If, like me, you forgot this question, but recover yourself in the middle of the way through, stop consenting then and there, and be silent.

We who believe in freedom will not rest until it comes.

Hopeful, semi-related postscript: A woman came up to me as I sat on the ground, feeling dirty. She knelt. “Are you okay?” I could have cried at her kindness. Though she was in plainclothes, she revealed a badge—a law enforcement officer of some kind—and told me that when she, showing her badge, asked the two men who questioned me what happened, they dismissed her entirely. “Not all of us are assholes.” “I know.” I believe, at least, in her. As one of the candid and elegant signs read: “The future is female.” Thanks be.

—Joseph Wun, a PeaceWorks Board member, lives in KC, MO, at Jerusalem Farm, which has four pillars: prayer, community, service, and simplicity.
Some people who come to Cherith Brook Catholic Worker House for fellowship, meals, or showers do not have a home address and have arranged for Cherith Brook to be their mailing address. However, beginning in May 2017, the police have conducted searches for suspects at Cherith Brook, 3308 E. 12th St., KC, MO. The officers sometimes drew their guns during these searches.

Eric and Jodi Garbison, with their children Henri and Diana, opened Cherith Brook in 2007 as a center of nonviolence and hospitality. Eric and Jodi have tried to question the recent police intrusions. Now they are up for trial, each charged with two counts of resisting arrest.

All are encouraged to come to the trial Friday, March 2, at 1:30 pm at the KC, MO, Municipal Court, 1101 Locust St., KC, MO.

“Though we often feel like moving on from this experience and the emotions it brings, we realize our social location gives us certain privileges that oblige us to make law enforcement accountable to their misuse of power, their lack of respect and honoring of protocol, excessive use of force, and as well as putting our son in danger,” the Garbisons e-mailed.

They added, “We’re pleased to have Judge (Ardie) Bland” as the trial judge. In 2013, Bland gave eight nuclear weapon resisters a “sentence of sentences,” asking them to write answers to questions about nuclear war and weapons, instead of imposing a harsher sentence.

By Jane Stoever

Some websites produce outlandish stories as commentary or for fun. These satirical news sources may not be reliable as factual stories. For non-satirical sites check out their “about” page to look for potential red flags.

Review the author’s credentials

Review the author’s biographical page to see what credentials they have. Do they have some sort of professional degree? Do they have professional ties to the topic?

Verify with other sources

Try to verify information presented in the article by seeing whether trusted news sources are reporting the same information.

Use common sense

Do the article’s claims make sense? Does the story sound plausible? Caution! Just because it sounds possible, doesn’t mean it’s true. Be careful to avoid confirmation bias.

Do ‘court support’ March 2 for Eric and Jodi Garbison of Cherith Brook

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By Jane Stoever

Here is my annual membership for PeaceWorks

- Membership: $40
- Donor: $50+
- Major Donor: $100+
- Family Membership: $60
- Group Membership: $75
- Limited-Income Membership: $5+
- Newsletter Subscription: $10
- Lifetime Membership: $1,000
- Sustaining Membership: $5+/mo.
- Send newsletter electronically

E-mail address: ________________________________
Name: ______________________________________
Address: ____________________________________
City, State, ZIP: _______________________________
Daytime phone: (___) _______ Evening phone: (___) _______
Black Lives Matter

By Joseph Davis

Black lives matter; yet the very air we breathe, this wondrous flesh we inhabit our ever-resilient presence in this vast, recalcitrant land grab called America is casus belli.

Black lives matter ... and have mattered since the Middle Passage, the cruel efficiency of slave patrols, whips and pistols, along with the salubrious pleasures of coon hunts and lynchings after church.

American power, with its oligarchs and hegemons, has always known Black lives matter when exercising their allegedly god-given right to terrorize through myriad blunt traumas, poll taxes, redlining or that catchy buzzword, austerity. ...

Brothers and Sisters of the African diaspora, we KNOW Black lives matter by our Refusal, in our Resistance, by our Rebellions, and in our Revolt.

With the imminent threat of police gunning us down one by one, we summon the collective Resilience of those who steadfastly and miraculously kept chasing that long arc of Justice in the universe. ...

BLACK LIVES MATTER. They ALWAYS have. They ALWAYS will.